



# National Child Care Information Center

*A service of the Child Care Bureau*

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## **COMMON CATEGORIES of CRITERIA USED in STATE TIERED QUALITY STRATEGIES**

Tiered quality strategies broadly encompass the systems of tiered reimbursement (a funding strategy), rated licensing (a licensing strategy), quality rating systems (a consumer strategy), and a combination of these strategies. The overarching goal of the tiered quality strategy is to improve child care quality through systemwide improvements rather than through an incremental approach. There are similarities and differences in these systems as implemented by States. States have developed their tiered quality strategies to address different needs and goals, and take into consideration factors such as the:

- Availability of data on the child care workforce, such as the size and education of the workforce;
- Existence of the professional development system in the State;
- Extent to which child care is regulated and the specifics of those regulations; and
- Type of child care arrangements used, etc.

In the development of a multi-level tiered quality strategy (or expansion from a two-level to a multi-level system), a State then examines research related to the quality criteria areas it wants to focus on and, typically, research that has demonstrated significant relationships between the criteria and the quality of care. For example, a common focus of State tiered quality strategies includes the structural elements of quality care, i.e. staff:child ratios and group size, staff qualifications/education, etc.

The following are a sample of common categories of criteria used in a sample of States with a multi-level tiered quality strategy. The categories of criteria are used to assign quality levels. Also included within the common categories are examples of the requirements for the quality levels. Although the categories and requirements are typically based on research, there is considerable variance with the organization and requirements within the components of quality levels.

### **Administrative Policies and Procedures**

- Annual performance evaluations
- Monthly staff meetings
- Planning time allotted to staff
- Written job descriptions
- Written personnel policies

### **Learning Environment**

- Children are read to 15 minutes a day
- Developmentally appropriate materials
- Developmentally appropriate weekly lesson plans
- Minimize transitions children have throughout the day
- Space arranged in interest areas

### **Parent/Family Involvement**

- Parent advisory board
- Bulletin board or newsletter
- Conferences and meetings
- Parent handbook/written program policies
- Parent resource center
- Parent satisfaction survey
- Families are welcomed at all times
- Written system for sharing daily happenings

### **Professional Development or Staff and/or Director Qualifications/Training**

- Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, additional credit hours in early childhood education, Associate of Arts (AA) degree, Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in early childhood education or relevant field, Master of Arts (MA) degree in early childhood education or relevant field
- Increased minimal staff/director qualifications
- Increased training hours
- Level on a State career path/lattice
- Membership in a professional organization
- Professional development/growth activities
- Professional development plans in place

### **Program Evaluation**

- Environmental rating scales
- Parent and staff surveys
- Retention goals/reducing staff turnover
- Self-assessment
- Written improvement plans

### **Staff Compensation**

- Child care benefit/discount
- Health insurance
- List of staff positions, salary and tenure
- Paid family leave
- Paid sick leave with annual increments

- Paid vacation/holidays
- Retirement plan/fund
- Salary scale based on level of education, experience
- Tuition reimbursement

Additional common categories of criteria include licensing status/compliance, staff:child ratios and group size, and accreditation.

### **Additional Information**

In the State resource listed below, the authors note the brief introduces a quality indicator model as a means of opening the dialogue for a Statewide conversation about a potential quality indicator system that could eventually include all of the State's center and family child care programs. While the data are specific to Wisconsin, the quality indicator model and the testing of the validity of the model may be useful as States are developing (or expanding) their tiered quality strategy.

■ “What Can Research Contribute to Child Care Consumer Rating Systems?” (December 2003), *Brief and to the Point* No. 13, by the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, uses data from the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership as catalysts to inform the development of a Statewide child care rating system. The resource states:

In this Brief, [they] use data from questionnaires completed by child care directors from randomly-selected centers participating in the state subsidy program (n=253) to illustrate a potential quality indicator model. [They] test the validity of this model by comparing quality as assessed by structural indicators against quality as assessed through observation in 26 randomly-selected centers and 26 centers that participated in a state-sponsored quality improvement project ... (page 2)

The five quality indicators in this model include teacher education, wages, experience, director education, and center education. Centers were assigned one “star” for each measure for which their center met the designated criteria.

The brief states that the findings:

... demonstrate a consistent relationship between the number of “stars” assigned and the observed quality of care in classrooms, using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R). These findings, indicating that centers with more stars earn higher ratings on the 7-point ECERS-R scale, suggest that it may be possible to estimate child care quality without actually observing in child care classrooms. (page 2)

This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/wccrp/pdfs/brief13.pdf>.

*The National Child Care Information Center does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.*

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